

(Re)Constructing Suffering: “Fascist Captivity” in Soviet Commemorative Culture

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the specific features of the Soviet variant of construction of the “discourse of suffering” as the main content-generating component of the memory of forced labor during the period of the Second World War. Here we mainly examine the variety of literary and journalistic recreations of the suffering of forced laborers, been proposed during the Soviet time. The source base thus encompasses newspaper articles, agitation and propaganda materials (including brochures and leaflets issued during the war and in the first postwar years), published letters, memoirs, and samples of folkloric works created by forced laborers, works of poetry and prose written by Soviet writers, fictional and documentary films, etc.

Key words: Communism, Soviet Union, Historical Anthropology, Memory, World War Two, Forced Labor.

(Re)Construyendo el sufrimiento: el “cautiverio fascista” en la cultura conmemorativa soviética

RESUMEN

Este artículo describe las características específicas de la variante soviética en la construcción del “discurso de sufrimiento” como el principal componente generador de contenido de la memoria del trabajo forzado durante el periodo de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Aquí examinamos principalmente la variedad de recreaciones literarias y periodísticas del sufrimiento de los trabajadores forzados que fueron propuestas durante la época soviética. De este modo, la base documental comprende artículos periodísticos, materiales de agitación y propaganda (incluyendo panfletos y folletos publicados durante la guerra y la primera posguerra), cartas publicadas, memorias y ejemplos de obras folklóricas creadas por trabajadores forzados, obras de poesía y prosa escritas por escritores soviéticos, películas documentales y de ficción, etc.

Palabras clave: Comunismo, Unión Soviética, antropología histórica, memoria, Segunda Guerra Mundial, trabajadores forzados.

Sumario: Introduction. 1. 1942 – Mid-1950s: (Re)Constructed Suffering as Tool for Mobilization and Liberation. 2. Mid-1950s – Late 1980s: (Re)Constructed Suffering as Highly Moral and Heroic Phenomenon. 3. Conclusions.

Introduction

Among the many crimes perpetrated by the Nazis during the Second World War was the exploitation of labor carried out by civilians for the benefit of the economy of the Third Reich. Out of 13.5 million foreigners who worked in Germany and the lands occupied by the German Reich throughout the war, 8.4 million were civilians from various Western and Eastern European countries. As of 30 September 1944, nearly 2.5 million of the civilian workers in the Third Reich were citizens of the Soviet Union, the so-called "Eastern workers," or *Ostarbeiter*.¹ This was one of the largest and most discriminated-against group of civilian workers, whose recruitment, labor exploitation, and upkeep were regulated by a whole array of orders and directives that were compulsory and exploitative in nature. The large-scale use of labor performed by civilian workers from the Soviet Union lasted from early 1942 until early 1945, and on the territory of the Third Reich they worked in all branches and spheres in which forced labor by foreigners had been introduced.

The enslavement of Soviet forced laborers stopped with the end of the war. However, they attained recognition above all as victims of Nazi persecutions only after the dissolution of the USSR, a country in which during both the war and in the postwar years their memories and experiences were an indissoluble component of the general discourse of the "Great Patriotic War." Be that as it may, they were used in a specific manner.

During the Soviet era the construction and introduction into the public space of the key semantic dominants of the "discourse of suffering" as the central content-generating component of the memory of forced labor in Nazi Germany took place during two historical periods: between 1942 and the mid-1950s and between the mid-1950s and the late 1980s.² These periods differed from each other, first of all, as to their key task of (re)creating appropriate memory; second, by the set of characteristic features and behavioral repertoire of the heroes and antiheroes of the given project. A captive girl and a man, above all an anti-fascist resistance fighter, became the heroes, in the figures of which the phenomenon of forced labor in the Soviet memory project found its imagistic embodiment. In its turn, throughout the war and the postwar years the antihero of this project was presented by the figure of an aggressor and invader—a German fascist enslaver, the depiction of whose characteristic features and behavioral traits remained practically unchanged, in contrast to the heroes of the project.

¹ SPOERER, M., *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz: Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutsche Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945*, Stuttgart, Munich, 2001, pp. 222–23.

² For discussion of periods, resources, and specific features in the construction of the image of forced labor in Ukrainian commemorative culture of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, see GRINCHENKO, G., "The Ostarbeiter of Nazi Germany in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukrainian Historical Memory," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, nos. 3–4 (September–December 2012), pp. 401–426. For a German-language version of this discussion, see GRINCHENKO, G., "Ukrainische Zwangsarbeiter im Dritten Reich: Besonderheiten der (Re)Konstruktion des historischen Gedächtnisses in der sowjetischen und postsowjetischen Ukraine," in *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen*, eds. POHL, D., SEBTA T. (Berlin, 2013) (forthcoming).

1. 1942 – Mid-1950s: (Re)Constructed Suffering as Tool for Mobilization and Liberation

The first stage of exploiting the rhetoric of suffering within the framework of the constructed general project of the memory of the Great Patriotic War spanned the period from 1942 to the mid-1950s, that is, it began almost immediately after the beginning of the mass deportations of the Soviet population to Germany and lasted until the end of the process of repatriation and return to the USSR of most of the people who had been deported to forced labor. The chief feature of the memory project at this stage was the fact that it was implemented precisely within the temporal limits of the event, and it was supposed to react to the changeability of situations and to balance on the edge of situational ambiguity, above all during the first years of the war.

As soon as reports about Soviet citizens who had been deported as forced laborers began entering the public space, their sufferings occupied the leading place in the constructed image and content of forced labor, which was immediately termed "slave labor." But, in publications dating to the second half of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 the category of "slave labor" was supposed to recreate not only the experiences of those people who had been brought by force to Germany but also of those who were forced to perform labor in the occupied territories. "Slave labor" acquired its exclusive meaning of forced labor that took place on the territory of the Third Reich somewhat later, when the German armies began withdrawing from occupied Soviet lands. Until that point, the agitation and propaganda publications that were present in the public space attested to the attempt to formulate contextually a forced labor discourse that was to be included in the general picture of the Nazis' crimes against the civilian population. For example, a collection of accounts by former Soviet forced laborers entitled *V fashistskom adu* [In the Fascist Hell],³ under the general title of "Accounts of People Who Were in Hitlerite Captivity," featured not only eyewitness testimonies of people who had been deported to forced labor in Germany but also of those whose lives in the occupied territories had turned into the same kind of slavery as that which was experienced outside the borders of the Soviet Union. Similarly, *Krov' za krov'! Smert' za smert'!* [Blood for Blood! Death for Death!]⁴, a collection that, as indicated in the book's subtitle, included materials on German atrocities in occupied Soviet districts, also contained letters and documentary essays about forced laborers. Two official Soviet documents were fundamental important to the elucidation of events connected with the forcible recruitment of the Soviet population to perform labor in Germany: the decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 2 November 1942 about the creation of an Extraordinary State Commission whose mandate was to establish and investigate the crimes of the German-fascist aggressors and their accomplices and the damage inflicted by them on Soviet citizens, collective farms, civic organizations, state enterprises, and institutions⁵ and the Note

³ *V fashistskom adu: Rasskazy sovetskikh liudei, pobывavshikh v gitlerovskoi nevole* (Moscow, 1943).

⁴ *Krov' za krov'! Smert' za smert'! Sbornik materialov o zverstvakh nemtsev v okkupirovannykh raionakh* (Moscow, 1942).

⁵ *Vneshniaia politika Sovetskogo Soiuz v period Otechestvennoi voiny: dok. i materialy*, vol. 1: 22 iunია 1941 g.– 31 dekabria 1943 g., ed. MAIOROV, S. (Moscow, 1946), pp. 322–25.

of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR dated May 1943.⁶ In the first document, the commission's responsibility to gather the largest possible number of facts related to the deportation of Soviet people to German slavery was combined with the duty to expose facts connected with the killings of civilians and the violence inflicted by the occupiers on defenseless people, including women, children, and the elderly. Individual brochures, based on the scores of documented materials that were collected by the commission, including letters and testimonies of forced laborers, were issued, in which the deportation of the civilian population to forced labor in Germany figured among the atrocities and crimes committed by the occupiers.⁷

The book *Ukrains'ke selianstvo ne bude v fashysts'kii nevoli* [The Ukrainian Peasantry Will Not Be in Fascist Captivity],⁸ a typical 1942 publication, is another example of the reading of the sufferings that awaited those who had been deported to forced labor in Germany. The author examines this deportation in the context of the policy of colonization in the occupied lands, in keeping with which the local population was to "give way" to the landowning colonist: "Hitler is promising to send millions of such colonists to Ukraine. The fascists are now sending landowners and colonists to Ukraine, and from Ukraine they are deporting slaves to forced labor in Germany."⁹ According to the author's emotionally-charged statements, the entire population of Ukraine was fated to be enserfed or yoked into slavery: "Mute serfs deprived of their rights in Ukraine, mute slaves deprived of their rights, having been deported to fascist Germany—this is what awaits us."¹⁰ It should be noted that, in comparison with enserfed peasants, the situation of the subjugated forced laborers is presented here as being much more difficult and inhumane: "In Germany fourteen concentration camps have already been created for Ukrainians. These are camps for present-day slaves. Slave-owners are deporting them from Ukraine and other occupied Soviet territories. Abuses and starvation are driving the unfortunates to insanity. They are being brought to the point that they are eating earthworms, grass, they are picking out scraps of food from slop buckets."¹¹

An interesting example of the process of building the discourse of forced laborers' suffering is *Chelovek No. 217* [Girl No. 217]¹², the only feature film ever released during the Soviet period that explored the theme of enslavement in Germany. The film begins with shots of a column of German POWs being marched through

⁶ MOLOTOV, V. M., *Nota narodnoho komisara zakordonnykh sprav pro masove nasyt'ne vyveden- nia v nimets'ko-fashysts'ke rabstvo myrnykh radians'kykh hromadian ta pro vidpovidal'nist' za tsei zlo- chyn nimets'kykh vlastei i pryvatnykh osib, iaki ekspluatuiut' pidnevil'nu pratsiu radians'kykh hromadian v Nimechchyni* (n.p., 1943).

⁷ See, e.g., *Zvirstva i zlochyny nimets'ko-fashysts'kykh zaharbnykiv na Kharkivshchyni: Zbirnyk dokumentiv* (Kyiv; Kharkiv, 1944); BEHMA, V., *Zlochyny nimtsiv i narodna borot'ba na Rovenshchyni* (Kyiv; Kharkiv, 1945); DUBYNA, K., *Zlodeianii nemtsev v Kieve* (Moscow, 1945); et al.

⁸ SHUL'HA, Z., *Ukrains'ke selianstvo ne bude u fashysts'kii nevoli* (Ufa, 1942).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24. The article "Russkaia devushka v Kel'ne," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 28 June 1942, ends with practi- cally the same words: "Do not forget that the fascist monster will transform everyone into slaves in your own land or will expel you to Germany for eternal hard labor".

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹² *Chelovek No. 217*, directed by Mikhail Romm (co-written by Evgenii Gabrilovich, music by Aram Khachaturian), Mosfilm Studio in collaboration with the Tashkent Film Studio, 1944.

Moscow in the summer of 1944. The people standing on both sides of the street are gazing at the crowd of ragged, unshaved, gloomy Germans. "How horrible he looks," an elderly woman in a head scarf comments every time a POW walks by. "[That one is] Black, hairy... And this one is just in a shirt. Oh, look at his hands! He probably threw children into a well or hanged [them]... That one is an executioner too." "Lord, how did this one end up here, the old woman smiles disdainfully all of a sudden. "[He is] limping and wearing glasses. He was probably sent off to war by force." Behind the granny appears a woman, also wearing a head scarf, from which gray hair pokes out. "You say he is limping? Wearing glasses? I know him... He is a killer!" The people standing nearby turn to her, and the camera zooms in on her face, placing the woman in the center of the shot: "You think that executioners are those who are dirty, bearded, and have skulls on their epaulettes? I saw them clean-shaven, with clean collars. They fed birds, kissed ladies' hands. I know them. They are all executioners!" The woman turns to the granny: "Mother, do you think that their killers are just those who are at the front? Who burned down our villages, poisoned people in mobile gas chambers? No, I know them. I lived with them! I saw them, just like I see you, face to face... I am twenty-five years old... Do I look it?" the woman asks furiously. On the screen "1944" turns into "1942," and the face of the gray-haired woman in the head scarf turns into the face of a young woman with black hair, the way she looked that year, a mere two years ago. The prolog to the film ends here and is followed by the story of this young woman, Tania, who was driven into forced labor as no. 217 and placed with the Krausses, a family of German grocers. At the end of the film the viewer returns once again to the year 1944, to the street along which the captive Germans are marching and where the girl, whose face is in the middle of the frame once again, delivers her final accusatory speech.

In my view, this cinematic "framing" device reflected extraordinarily accurately the forced laborers' quest for a place in the official taxonomy of memoirs and their own construction of memory of the war, both of which were taking place when the war was still in progress. The main heroine appears as a "bearer" of knowledge and experience, unknown to other people, which are intended to become integrated into the general picture of Nazi crimes and one of the points for indicting fascism, as well as a slogan of the implacable struggle that was waged against them. In the heroine's final speech the people who were worked to death in captivity are mentioned alongside those who perished heroically in battle, were executed in the occupied territories, or died on the gallows or in gas chambers. At the same time, the film's pathos is aimed at exposing the "everyday fascism" of "ordinary" Germans, who are accused of inhumanity and their support of a racist ideology that was manifested in their treatment of Soviet forced laborers, the truth of which is intended to be conveyed by the story of "Girl No. 17." On the day she arrives at the farm, Tania poses the following question to the mathematician Sergei Ivanovich, now employed as a stableman: "Who are they?" "Ordinary average Germans," the scholar replies. "And is that very awful?" she continues. "Ordinary average Germans?" The heroine then answers her own question: "Yes, that is very, very awful!"

Between 1942 and the mid-1950s, the chronological framework mentioned earlier, a girl enslaved in a foreign land [*polonianka*] was the favorite figure of Soviet pro-

paganda, which broadcast information about the essence of forced labor in Germany and simultaneously stereotyped this phenomenon through the imagistic formulas of subjugation and distress. Throughout the war this image was intended to carry out, first and foremost, a clear-cut mobilizing task: not only to boost the martial spirit of combatants, who had to liberate their wives, sisters, and girlfriends, but also to unite the entire society in a struggle against the hated enemy that was abusing, torturing, and killing the civilian population in the occupied territories, and maiming and working to death those who had been deported to Germany. For example, in 1942 the journal *Ukrains'ka literature* [Ukrainian Literature] published a short story by the distinguished Ukrainian writer Yurii Ianovs'kyi. Entitled "Ukraïinka" [The Ukrainian Girl], it describes an encounter between members of a Soviet tank crew and a girl named Mariika, who is on her way home from Germany. The Germans had maimed the girl for setting fire to one German's farm and using gas to poison another farmer: they cut off her hands and sent her packing. "The fascists chopped off my hands and sent me back to Ukraine: you all see what happens to those who flee from German hard labor. People say: may fear eat up your hearts, may horror freeze your bones." But the heroine turns her injuries and sufferings into a slogan: "I walk the earth like a holy *kobzar* [an itinerant Ukrainian bard, who sang to his own accompaniment], and I carry my maiming high, like this, and *I cry out for revenge and call for retribution* [my emphasis—G.G.]. Rise up, free people; rise up, my Ukraine; rise up Soviet land! I go like this! I go like this!"¹³

Similar calls to take revenge against the Germans for the sufferings endured by Soviet citizens who were deported to forced labor were uttered not only by literary heroes; they also appeared in the pages of numerous propaganda publications, such as a mobilizing selection of letters published in 1943, which were written by people who had been deported to forced labor from the territory of Belarus.¹⁴ In this brochure, the citing of leaflets with such expressive titles as "We See Only Death, Tears, and Suffering" and "We No Longer Have the Strength to Endure These Sufferings" concludes with the passionate slogan "Death to the German-Fascist Slave-Owners!"

As stated earlier, the characteristic feature of the memory project in the early years of the war was the requirement that it react to an event that was still ongoing, continuing in space and time, and whose time-limit (just like the sense of the event) could not be predicted for a certain period of time. For example, in the summer of 1942 no one could tell how long the practice of deporting the Soviet population to Germany would last, what transformations it would undergo, and whether it would experience any transformation at all, etc. But it was mandatory to react to this situation, as to many others, no matter how indeterminate it was. In the case of the constructed image of the captive girl, this occasionally determined the emergence of topics, in which a certain experience of suffering was depicted with such excessively thick colors and so hyperbolized that memory of it eventually led to unexpected actualizations and consequences.

¹³ IANOV'S'KYI, IU., "Ukraïinka," in IANOV'S'KYI, IU., *Tvory v 5 t.*, vol.1: *Opovidannia* (Kyiv, 1958), pp. 318–19.

¹⁴ *Pis'ma iz nemetskogo rabstva* (Moscow, 1943).

For example, various agitational leaflets, brochures, and announcements published in 1942–43, identify bordellos and houses of ill repute, large numbers of which were created by the Nazis in order to provide "pleasure to the fascist scum," as the place of work where "*hundreds of thousands* [my emphasis—G.G.] of healthy, strong, and beautiful young girls aged between eighteen and twenty-five" had ended up.¹⁵ A report stating that "the Germans, for whom Russian [*sic*] women and girls work, are forcing them to live with them"¹⁶ was intended to make a powerful psychological and mobilizational impact, as was the statement that "drunken German house owners, farmers, [and] landowners are raping teenaged girls, passing them to their lackeys as mistresses, infecting them with syphilis."¹⁷

In examining this subject as a definite measure that was used to create the image of forced labor, I must emphasize first of all that the image, now engraved in memory, of a Soviet woman who may have had relations with Germans in Germany (over time it no longer mattered whether they had engaged in them of their own free will or by force) carried considerable consequences for liberated female *Ostarbeiter* in the last months of the war. Women, now in their dotage, who were deported as forced laborers during the war remember being insulted and humiliated, and recall numerous incidents of Soviet soldiers dishonoring and raping Soviet women after the Red Army entered Germany. Today they are no longer embarrassed to talk about this even on camera, as in the documentary film *The Price of Victory*, part of the *OST* series, which was broadcast several times on Ukrainian television.¹⁸

Second, the figure cited in Soviet propaganda of *hundreds of thousands* of Soviet women and girls who allegedly worked in houses of ill repute in Germany does not withstand scrutiny. Such establishments existed on the territory of Germany in camps housing civilian workers and concentration camps.¹⁹ The theory of the intentional mass deportation of Soviet females to such establishments has not been corroborated by documents to this day. It may be presumed that if some Soviet women did indeed end up in them, their numbers were far smaller than, for example, the 350,000 (!) young Ukrainian women who, in 1943 alone, became servants in the employ of German families.²⁰

Third, as regards the practice of sexual relations outside of these "special" establishments between "masters" and their "female slaves" (or, in the broader sense, between a German man and a German woman and between a male forced laborer and

¹⁵ SHUL'HA, Z., *Ukrains'ke selianstvo*, p. 23.

¹⁶ POL', K. A., *Inostrannye rabochie v nemetsko-fashistskom rabstve* (Moscow, 1943), p. 41.

¹⁷ KONONENKO, E. V., *Otomsti nemtsu* (Moscow, 1943), p. 8.

¹⁸ *Tsina peremohy*, directed by Serhii Bratishko (Ukraine, Pershyi Natsional'nyi channel, 2005–2006). The first part of this documentary series is entitled *Nevidoma okupatsiia* [Unknown Occupation], the second—*OST*, the third—*Partyzany* [Partisans], and the fourth—*Pravda okopiv* [The Truth of Trenches]. The series is based on materials held at the H. S. Pshenychnyi Central State Cinema, Photo and Phono Archive and the testimonies of eyewitnesses, including former *Ostarbeiter*, both men and women.

¹⁹ For recent research on the latter by a German historian, see SOMMER, R., *Das KZ-Bordell: Sexuelle Zwangsarbeit in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Paderborn, 2009).

²⁰ NIETHAMMER, L., "Von der Zwangsarbeit im Dritten Reich zur Stiftung 'Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft,'" in "Gemeinsame Verantwortung und moralische Pflicht": *Abschlussbericht zu den Auszahlungsprogrammen der Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft"*, eds. JANSEN, M., SAATHOFF, G. (Wallstein Verlag, 2007), p. 34.

female forced laborer from the East), within the framework of the harshly regulated rules of conduct imposed by the Nazi state during the war, to which both foreigners and German citizens were subjected, it was very difficult not only to imagine them, but also to implement them. For example, the notorious "Ostarbeiter-Erlasse," the special decree about Eastern forced laborers signed by Reichsführer-SS and chief of the German police Heinrich Himmler on 20 February 1942, which is frequently cited in the current literature on the history of Soviet forced laborers, included, among other things, a circular announcing that sexual relations between this "labor force" and Germans were punishable exclusively by execution (hanging), and sexual relations with other foreigners—by imprisonment in a concentration camp.²¹ Some "easing" was recorded in documents issued in the summer of 1942, for example, in the "Instruction of the Security Police concerning the Treatment of Soviet-Russian Workers from the Old Russian Region" of 24 June 1942, which was issued by the Gestapo in Dusseldorf.²² Punishment for sexual relations with Germans remained severe: the death penalty awaited men "from the East," and for women—imprisonment in a concentration camp. However, sexual relations with non-German foreigners were not prohibited if they did not violate camp order. Any attempt by German guards "to approach a Russian woman in an undignified manner" was punishable by incarceration in a prison or concentration camp.

As regards the use, in Soviet propaganda during the first half of the war, of the theme of the sufferings endured by deported Soviet women who were disgraced and dishonored, it must be noted that their sufferings acquired a poetic, albeit mediated, character above all in the works of Soviet poets.²³ One of the main content-generating motifs of poems written during the early years of the war (for the most part, narrated from a woman's point of view) was the theme of parting (usually forever) and the sufferings experienced by slave women because of the impossibility of returning to a normal life even if they ever manage to return from captivity, because enslavement in the categories of that time meant, first and foremost, disgrace and sullied womanhood. Indeed, in the realities of the period from 1942 to early 1943 it was very difficult to imagine when and how deportation to "slavery" would end, how the lives of these women who were being held in captivity would subsequently unfold, and how long this period of slavery would last. Three powerful poems serve as an example of, first, this uncertainty and, second, the worst possible fate that, as Soviet propaganda insisted, awaited a young, unmarried woman in slavery: "Kateryna," by the Ukrainian poet Andrii Malyshko, "A Letter from Captivity," by the Belarusian writer Arkadii Kuleshov, and "Farewell," by the Russian poet Mikhail Isakovskii, all of which were written in 1942 and 1943. All three poems, with their jarring lines

²¹ HERBERT, U., "Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des 'Ausländer-Einsatzes' in HERBERT, U., *Der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin; Bonn, 1985), p. 181.

²² Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (HStAD), RW 36: "Merkblatt für die sicherheitspolizeiliche Behandlung der sowjetrussischen Arbeitskräfte aus dem altrussischen Gebiet." Ulrich Herbert graciously provided me with a copy of this document.

²³ It is noteworthy that all these poems were written by male poets. With the exception of folkloric works from so-called "girls' song albums," during the Soviet era not a single poem or prose work about forced labor was written by a woman.

describing sorrow and parting, contain not so much an appeal for liberation as much as a call for revenge—revenge for the suffering that remains unspoken, but which is understood in these texts. In each of these three poems the allusion to (anticipated or possible) sullied womanhood is symbolized by the heroine's braids that are: trampled (in Isakovskii's poem), purchased (in Kuleshov's), and unbraided and loosened to the waist (in Malyshko's):

...Maybe I should lie beneath a mound
With a broken heart journeying in a foreign land,
And upon my silken braids
A German's iron boot will trample...
Say goodbye, dear one! Forget about those braids.
They are dead. They can grow no more.
Forget the guelder rose, on the guelder rose is dew,
Forget it all. Only seek revenge!^{24 25}

That city is large and gray,
Unpleasant voices can be heard from a foreign platform,
The doors have swung open,
And they order us to leave the cars.
They bring us to a slave market.
I can't write anymore, o, how grief weighs on my heart!
They are buying girl's braids here
And girl's tears.
Christina.²⁶

...How you wrung your hands
To the frantic groaning and noise,
How unbelievable anguish caused
Your braids to fall at your feet!
Only surrounded by dusty railway sleepers,
Two braids were undone – two beauties,
And on the copper Schwaben land
Fell two drops of crimson dew...²⁷

In connection with the works of Soviet poets who explored the subject of slave labor, it must be noted that the theme of the suffering and grievous distress endured by forced laborers was most brilliantly reflected in poems that were written during the war and in the first postwar years. They are linked thematically with the deporta-

²⁴ ISAKOVSKII, M. V., "Proshchal'naia," in ISAKOVSKII, M. V., *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1965), p. 245.

²⁵ All poems and folk songs are translated by Olena Jennings.

²⁶ KULESHOV, A., "Pis'mo iz plena," in *Belarus' v ogne*, ed. GLEBKA, P. (Moscow, 1943), p. 71.

²⁷ MALYSHKO, A., "Kateryna," in *Zdrastvui, Ukraina!:* (*Lit.-estr. sb. proizvedenii ukrainskikh pisatelei*) (Moscow; Leningrad, 1944), p. 76.

tion of Soviet citizens to forced labor in Germany, and an early motif was the theme of departure and parting as well as the resulting feelings of bitterness and uncertainty about one's fate. In a poem by the Ukrainian poet Oleksa Iushchenko we read:

The cars clatter, the cars rush
In the black cursed land,
They race, windows flicker...
Goodbye, Ukraine, goodbye!

...You are my guelder rose, will my voice reach
My sun-filled land from this captivity...
As if in an epic song, I'll dry out, I'll die...
Goodbye, Ukraine, goodbye!

The poet Iurii Buriakivets' writes:

Foreign landscapes burn their eyes,
Guttural words invade their breast like a crow.
And the cars groan, in them youth suffers.
Those born in light are taken into darkness...²⁹

However, the lyrical poems of the distinguished Ukrainian poet Andrii Malyshko take pride of place in the corpus of poetry devoted to the fate of forced laborers. This is the subject of his famous poem "The Female Captive," written in 1944, in which he describes the fate of a Ukrainian girl, who went from attending grade ten in her native land to being deported to Germany to carry out forced laborer; several poems from his collection *Iaroslavna*; and a poetic cycle entitled "Katria" ("Kateryna"). In my estimation, the poem "Kateryna" contains the finest and most powerful lines ever written on this subject: they virtually seethe with the poet's hatred toward the enemy and express his indescribable pain for the sufferings of the woman who was taken into German captivity:

....I'm going to look for a word,
into which I can pour all my hate and passion:
On my lips, tightly clasped,
Kateryna's soul is on fire.

With every ounce of crimson blood
I will yell louder than thunder,
Over this damn German land
About your terrible deeds!³⁰

²⁸ Cited in *Radians'ka pisnia*, ed. KIN'KO, A. (Kyiv, 1967), p. 228.

²⁹ Cited in KOVAL', M., *U bytvi z fashyzmom* (Kyiv, 1964), p. 118.

³⁰ MALYSHKO, A., "Kateryna," p. 77.

No less emotional a topic was the wartime sufferings of children in German captivity.³¹ After the war, the theme of children's sufferings was developed within the framework of the conflict that had emerged between the Soviet Union and its former wartime allies. The film *They Have a Motherland* (1949), directed by Aleksandr Faintsimmer and Vladimir Legoshin and based on Sergei Mikhalkov's play *I Want to Go Home!*,³² is the story of two Soviet intelligence agents operating on the territory of West Germany, Dobrynin (P. Kadochnikov) and Sorokin (V. Sanaev), who are searching for an orphanage housing Soviet children who, after all their dreadful experiences in Nazi Germany, are still suffering—but this time because of the arbitrariness and outrages perpetrated against them by the "new exploiters." The film was awarded the Stalin Prize, Third Grade, for its masterful direction and acting, as well as for the topical nature of this subject in the entire public discourse of the postwar years.

Both the play and the film were based on "real events," as Aleksei Briukhanov noted in his memoirs *That's How It Was*, while the main scene in the film depicting a session of the committee attended by representatives of the British Zone of Occupation of Germany and officers from the Soviet Repatriation Mission, is largely based on the stenographic transcriptions of the minutes of this meeting.³³ The overtly propagandistic thrust of the film was meant to expose the "Anglo-American" allies' policy regarding Soviet repatriants, which lay in the Western powers' alleged refusal to allow citizens of the USSR to return to their native land and in their plans to exploit them for their own nefarious goals: "Do you want your son to fight in a foreign legion or to suffer from incapacitating work in mines and

³¹ My previously-cited articles (see n1) feature a telling and emotionally-charged quotation from Elena Kononenko's brochure *Otomsti nemtsu!*, which recounts the sufferings endured by a child slave laborer in Germany. It is worth citing here as well: "S/he [the child] read books and fashioned model airplanes, skated merrily and went to the cinema to see a new film. S/he lived warmly underneath the wing of a loving mother, under the wing of the Soviet motherland, for which children were the most precious thing [...]. And now imagine her or him as a slave. A pitiful slave with no rights. The German fascists ripped her or him from the family, crushed her or his bright dreams, and brought her or him to Germany for slave labor. And now s/he lives there as an orphan, without a father, without a mother, s/he is starving, suffering, homesick. The Germans beat her or him, abuse her or him, force her or him to bend her or his back in serfdom. S/he is a slave [...]. S/he cannot find a place for her- or himself away from the intolerable insult. S/he tucks her- or himself into rags at night and cries, calls to her or his mother, whispering [...]. But there is no mother. A German with a black mug, a fascist overseer, hearing the child's groaning, flicks a whip over her or his back, across the face, on the eyes, and shouts: "Be quiet, you Russian!" (pp. 3–4).

³² MIKHALKOV, S., *Ia khochu domoi*, Moscow, Leningrad, 1949. In the prolog to his play the author describes the fate that will befall Soviet children if they remain with the Allies: "Who will a youngster from Pskov become—a soldier, a spy, a slave deprived of his native land and shelter, a mute working beast?"

³³ BRIUKHANOV, A. *Vot kak eto bylo: O rabote missii po repatriatsii sovetskikh grazhdan*, ed. VILENSKII, M. (Moscow, 1958), p. 143. To a certain degree Briukhanov's memoirs about the work of the Soviet Repatriation Mission for the return of citizens of the USSR from the British Zone of Occupation of Germany and Denmark, of which he was the director beginning in the late 1940s, summed up the "repatriation" subject. Overtly propagandistic in content and constructed in terms of the harsh opposition between the repatriation policies of the USSR and Western countries, these memoirs were intended to reinforce in mass consciousness the idea that the Soviet government's policy vis-à-vis its citizens was just and to demonstrate the predatory and exploitative nature of the USSR's erstwhile allies, who were resorting to the same types of enslavement measures as had Nazi Germany.

shafts?" the head of the British commission says in answer to his underlings' question as to why these Soviet children are not being allowed to go back home. Also noteworthy is the film's symbolic intention to recreate the continuity of the exploitation of forced labor. The British permit the adoption of a little Soviet girl named Ira Sokolova by a character named Frau Wurst (played by Faina Ranevskaya), who, upon meeting the girl, looks inside her mouth and feels her muscles. At the end of the film, when the girl is reunited with her real mother, the German woman shouts indignantly that the girl "cost her a lot."

In general, the manner in which the fate of the displaced persons (DPs) was presented to the Soviet "consumer" demonstrated interesting parallels with the condition of slavery under the Germans and the sufferings that were endured under the Nazi regime—sufferings that these Soviet people were now reliving at the hands of the USSR's former allies and other capitalist countries.³⁴ For example, one issue of the Soviet Ukrainian journal *Suchasne i maibutn'e* [The Present and Future] for 1950 features an item entitled "The Voice of Slaves" (Letters from Capitalist Hard Labor), which, citing the American press, reported: "Above the displaced persons' camps in Europe hovers the spirit of a savagely cruel forced labor market. The representatives of individual overseas countries are proposing to look through a 'catalog,' like cattle-breeders [looking through] pedigree cattle breed books. They go from camp to camp, as though to sections of a department store, and the labels [worn by forced laborers] indicate race, height, age, marital status, profession, and muscle condition."³⁵ The thematic and emotional emphases in reports written by "slaves of capitalist hard labor" who submitted their writings to similar publications were very similar to those that Soviet propaganda offered Soviet readers during the war years, such as collections or articles and books devoted to "fascist slavery": "In the camps in Whitley, Markham, Harborough and others [in England]," writes Vasyl' P., "people live in iron barracks similar to huge barrels. In the summertime the heat in the barracks is intolerable: the iron heats up a lot in the daytime and the air is so roasting that there is nothing to breathe, and that is why the majority of the camp residents sleep outside. It is the opposite in the winter: it is fiercely cold in the barracks, owing to which people catch colds and fall sick with tuberculosis and rheumatism."³⁶ Similar to earlier publications about "fascist slavery," these reports also featured an appeal for their liberation from slavery: "The authors of the letter express the hope that Soviet people will never forget their brothers in captivity and will help them to free themselves from slavery. One displaced person in England writes: 'I very much want to return to Ukraine. I have had my fill of suffering in a foreign land. I want to devote all my energy to the socialist Homeland. Help me to leave England.'"³⁷

³⁴ It was the practice of *Suchasne i maibutn'e*, the mouthpiece of the Union of Soviet Writers of Ukraine (appeared from 1945 to 1952) to publish similar reports and articles with eye-catching titles.

³⁵ "Holos nevil'nykiv (Lysty z kapitalistychnoi katorhy)," *Suchasne i maibutn'e*, no. 1 (1950), p. 37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ VOITENKO, O., "V taborakh nevil'nykiv," *Suchasne i maibutn'e*, no. 6 (1949), p. 33.

2. Mid-1950s – Late 1980s: (Re)Constructed Suffering as Highly Moral and Heroic Phenomenon

During the war and the early postwar years the image of the male forced laborer paled in comparison with the intensively-exploited image of the captive girl, and its contours were inadequately outlined. Its semantic design and fixation in mass consciousness began later, initially within the context of a certain "rehabilitation" of prisoners of war and the active construction of the discourse of the antifascist struggle, and later, within the channel of the well-known, general reformatting of the Soviet war memory project and the construction of its fundamental sense in the categories of the Great Victory and commemoration of fallen heroes. The construction of the image of precisely a male forced laborer comprised one of the main features of the second stage of the "recreation of suffering" within the framework of the Soviet forced labor memory project, which spanned the period from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s. The lower chronological limit of this stage was marked by the completion of the repatriation of Soviet citizens and the beginning of the construction of memory not from "the inside" but at a certain remove from the recreated event; the upper limit of this stage was marked by the end of the existence of both the Soviet war project and the country in general. The main feature of this stage was the expansion of the semantics of forced labor, thanks to the enrichment of the traits and behavioral repertoire in the rather one-sided depiction of captive girls (during the first stage), by the addition to the memory project of the image of a male (above all an antifascist resistance fighter). These images were eventually merged into a single memory space, and the (re)created suffering of its main heroes was transformed into a highly moral and heroic phenomenon within this space.

The active construction of the image of an antifascist fighter as forced laborer began in the late 1950s in the context of depicting the heroic struggle of Soviet citizens who had ended up in German captivity and of the general conceptualization of the resistance movement.³⁸ However, the significantly greater expansion of the semantics of forced labor was made possible by the commemorative changes that took place in the 1960s, which Dmitrii Andreev and Gennadii Bordiugov have called "a breakthrough into the space of life."³⁹ To their idea of a "breakthrough" as an attempt by the new Soviet regime to sanctify everyday life in its most trivial manifestations by means of the symbols of victory may be added a "reverse" reflection, in the creative works produced in those years, of a rather broad spectrum of routine wartime practices that were unquestionably heroic but much more complex from the standpoint of the range of perspectives that reflected these practices. Here, among other things, the experience of forced labor and the daily practice of survival acquired a highly moral dimension, and suffering ultimately attained a heroic character and was likened to resistance: "Dignified human behavior in difficult circumstances is no small thing. Sometimes it may be rightly called heroic. V. Semin's novel...establishes the extraor-

³⁸ See, e.g., BRODSKII, E. A., "Osvoboditel'naia bor'ba sovetskikh liudei v fashistskoi Germanii (1943–1945 gody)," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (1957), pp. 85–99.

³⁹ ANDREEV, D. A. and BORDIUGOV, G. A., *Prostranstvo pamiati: Velikaia Pobeda i vlast'*, Moscow, 2005.

dinary moral sense of such heroic conduct, the daily, commonplace resistance that is sometimes obscure, nameless, hopeless yet constant."⁴⁰

The surname mentioned in the above quotation is that of the well-known Soviet prose writer Vitalii Semin, who chose as the theme of his works what may be called the "forcible commonplaceness of slave labor," the behavior, suffering, and survival of people who were imprisoned in the work camps of Nazi Germany. In 1976 the popular Soviet literary journal *Druzhba narodov* [Friendship of Peoples] published his autobiographical work *Nagrudnyi znak OST* [The OST Chest Badge],⁴¹ which is narrated by an adolescent who was deported to forced labor in Germany when he was fifteen. For three years the hero of this novel works in a factory in the town of Langenberg, in North Rhein-Westphalia, and his experiences there, superbly portrayed by Semin, include the teenager's back-breaking work in a foundry, which depletes his last reserves of strength, serious illness, period of quarantine in a typhus barrack, incarceration in a prison and abuse at the hands of his jailers, as well as the constant fear of death, physical pain, and—what is far important for the hero—the constant, extreme, and unspeakable spiritual distress that plague him throughout those three long years. Certainly, the most terrible thing experienced by the hero of the novel is the feeling—unfamiliar to the teenaged boy and forcibly experienced in the conditions of captivity—of "hatred that turns the soul inside out," as he puts it. "It is 1942 and the Germans are fighting in distant lands; sometimes the war flies over to them on airplanes. The towns in the Ruhr region stand undamaged; undamaged are the new asphalt and old cobblestone roads; unbroken are the windows of the many small and large shops. So, whence comes this energy of blind hatred that does not choose either the old or the young from our crowd? After all, you cannot simply load up on hatred first thing in the morning, like having a cup of coffee. This is no ordinary feeling. Meanwhile, though, this brutality that is directed at us affects us with its energy, consistency, organized manner, and daily omnipresence."⁴² The draining work, degrading life, and the disdain and cruelty on the part of the Germans—barring some minor exceptions, there is not a single German character in the novel who shows any compassion to the hero—cause Sergei, through whom the novel is narrated, constant and intolerable pain that he can neither stomach nor assuage. The teenager gradually begins to realize that he can rid himself of the pain "that did not retreat for even a second, which, like starvation, had accumulated in his muscles and brain, and flowed through his vessels" only by killing his malefactors: "It was under his fingernails, in his spine, in his blinded eyes—kill!" His hatred of these malefactors is so powerful that it is extended to all Germans: "At the time I was physically incapable of thinking 'this German is tall and handsome.' The word 'German' came first and it gave utterance to the rest of the words." This hatred extends even to the German language: "In no other language is it possible to shout so furiously. In any other language there is

⁴⁰ DEDKOV, I., "Pokoriaiushchaia pravda," in I. DEDKOV, *Vozvrashchenie k sebe*, Moscow, 1978, p. 307.

⁴¹ SEMIN, V., "Nagrudnyi znak OST," *Druzhba narodov*, no. 4 (1976), pp. 93–168; no. 5 (1976), pp. 67–195.

⁴² Cited in SEMIN, V., *Nagrudnyi znak "OST"* (Rostov-on-Don, 1987), pp. 82–83. For the earlier, Moscow, edition, see n47 below.

simply a lack of sounds for this." But when his pain and hatred begin to recede, in their place appear no less draining feelings—of guilt toward those whom he wanted to kill and pangs of conscience stirred by his terrible intentions. The sufferings resulting from constant humiliation and abuse, the thirst for revenge, and the awareness that his own cruelty is dishonorable are just a few of the many daunting experiences endured by the teenaged *Ostarbeiter*, which Semin depicts so masterfully and penetratingly. These experiences were recapitulated by authors of numerous book reviews and reactions published in leading Soviet literary and scholarly periodicals in the period between late 1970 and the mid-1980s.⁴³ In these articles Semin is hailed as one of the finest and most amazing novelists of recent decades (A. Adamovych), and his novel *Nagrudnyi znak OST* is called a scholarly and psychological treatise⁴⁴ whose "sincerity and honesty and mature thinking resemble the attestations of witnesses to some higher sense of moral responsibility, as though the completeness of history's verdict condemning fascism depended on them to a considerable degree."⁴⁵ Of crucial importance to this article's elucidation of the features connected with the (re)creation in the Soviet war discourse of the sufferings of forced laborers is the assessment of Semin's work that appeared in the various articles and reactions to his book: to wit, his writings fostered recollection and memory retention of the experiences and sufferings of those who were fated to be tested in German captivity: "V. Semin's brilliant books restore the contours of a historical period that has passed and of the individual during this period. They are pitted against impatience, haste, and forgetfulness. In them resides the clear memory of a generation that came to know the 'degree of the horrible.'"⁴⁶

Vitalii Semin continued exploring the theme of the forced laborer in Germany in his unfinished novel *Plotina* [The Weir], which was published posthumously in 1981 in *Druzhba narodov*, the same journal in whose pages *Nagrudnyi znak OST* first appeared.⁴⁷ In it the author continued his reflections on the feelings, sufferings, and experiences, including the impossibility of committing murder, which had tormented him during the writing of *Nagrudnyi znak OST*. In the concluding scene of this sequel novel the hero stops himself as he is about to fire a shot: "The distance between a shot and no shot is shorter than the movement of the index finger. I remembered this both with my fingers and my ears, in which the shot always echoed sooner than you expected, and with the hand that cannot cope with the recoil. It is not possible to detect

⁴³ See, e.g., ADAMOVICH, A., "Nichego vazhnee," *Voprosy literatury*, no. 3 (1983), pp. 105–47; LAVLINSKII, L., "Tsena istiny," *Novyi mir*, no. 4 (1979), pp. 262–69; ZOLOTUSSKII, I., "Vlast' nad sud'boi," *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 12 (1981), pp. 41–44; BORISOVA, I., "Uroki chteniia," *Novyi mir*, no. 4 (1986), pp. 232–42; DEDKOV, I., "Chestnost' pamiati," in I. DEDKOV, *Vo vse kontsy doroga daleka*, Iaroslavl, 1981, pp. 71–92; *idem*, "Pokoriaiushchaia pravda," pp. 269–318; *idem*, "Vysokii uroven' mysli," *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 18 May 1979; ZALYGIN, S., "Slozhnost' prostoty (Obsuzhdenie romana Vitaliia Semina 'Nagrudnyi znak OST' v Sovete po proze Soiuzu pisatelei RSFSR)," in *Sobesedovaniia* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 245–49; KAMIANOV, V., "Iz pervykh ruk," *Novyi mir*, no. 1 (1982), pp. 246–52.

⁴⁴ ZALYGIN, "Slozhnost' prostoty," p. 262.

⁴⁵ DEDKOV, "Chestnost' pamiati," p. 90.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁷ Two years after its serialization in the journal *Druzhba narodov*, Semin's novel was issued as a book by Izvestiia Publishers: SEMIN, V., *Nagrudnyi znak "OST": Roman, Povest', Rasskazy*, Moscow, 1978.

the boundary between a shot and no shot. But I had gotten stuck on this nonexistent boundary many a time... It is terrible to say that I lacked anger, memory ..."⁴⁸ For years afterwards the author expended his wrath and memory not on killing but on the written word because, according to him, "in order to say something one time and be heard, you have to say it ideally."⁴⁹ Indeed, Semin expressed himself ideally about the superhuman testing by captivity.

Finally, a separate place in the corpus of Soviet sources embodying the essence of labor in Germany, including in the categories of the tribulations and sufferings of the "slaves of German hard labor," is devoted to works of captivity folklore, the most popular device during the Soviet era for (re)creating the memory of forced labor. Just like the small number of memoirs, letters, and accounts written by forced laborers, the folkloric works of forced laborers—as sifted through the sieve of Soviet censorship and presented to the public in the form of published texts throughout the Soviet period—followed the lead of the constructed forced labor memory project and was meant to reflect that part of the remembered past which corresponded to the main task of this project. In those cases where some folkloric writings of forced laborers were published in Soviet times, part of the proper past reflected, first and foremost, the fact that the songs, simple rhyming poems [*chas-tushki*], and couplets, later known as "songs of the unvanquished,"⁵⁰ "songs of pain and revenge,"⁵¹ and "songs of anger and protest,"⁵² had been composed in captivity. It is noteworthy that the commentaries appended by compilers of anthologies or authors of scholarly articles emphasized the emergence of these songs as the result of the refusal to be subjugated and of the protest and struggle of Soviet people who had been driven into captivity.⁵³ However, in and of themselves the published samples of folklore written by former forced laborers offered the Soviet reader a much broader and more "humane" semantic framework of the period spent in captivity than the ideological mantras of the "grandeur of the spirit, heroism, and indestructibility of the Soviet people," which were repeated in publication after publication. These publicized examples of captivity folklore also revealed the degree to which the richness of the spectrum of possibilities offered by folkloric writings was used

⁴⁸ SEMIN, V., "Plotina," *Druzhba narodov*, no. 5 (1981), p. 87.

⁴⁹ Cited in REGINIA, L., "Obozhrzhenyi fashizmom: O sud'be i tvorchestve Vitaliia Semina v Tret'em reikhe i v sobstvennoi strane," *Neva*, no. 5 (1995), p. 165.

⁵⁰ "Stikhi i pesni nepokorenykh," in *Ocherki russkogo narodnopoeticheskogo tvorchestva sovetskoi epokhi*, eds. ASTAKHOVA, A. M., DMITRAKOV, I. P., and LOZANOVA A. N., Moscow, Leningrad, 1952, pp. 373–78.

⁵¹ VLADIMIRSKII, A. N., "Pesni boli i mesti: (obzor narodnykh pesen, sozdannykh v fashistskoi nevole)," *Problemy izucheniia russkogo ustnogo narodnogo tvorchestva*, vyp. 1 (1975), pp. 72–84.

⁵² AKYMENKO, F., "Pisni hniyu ta protestu," *Narodna tvorchist' ta etnografia*, no. 4 (1972), pp. 40–46.

⁵³ The following rhetorical formula, prevalent during the Soviet era, may be regarded as an example of the inclusion of forced labor folklore in the body of folk poetry related to the Great Patriotic War: "Even in fascist Germany Soviet people did not forget who they were, that they were the sons and daughters of the socialist Motherland. And that is why the fascists were unable to transform the freedom-loving Soviet people into slow-witted, stupefied slaves. The most testamentary elements of an individual raised in the socialist order is transmitted through songs and simple rhyming poems composed by our people in Germany. Here you have love of the native land, the unmasking of fascist slavery, and the call to destroy fascism" (KOVAL', M., "Z istorii narodnoi poezii rokov Velykoi Vitchyznianoï viiny," *Narodna tvorchist' ta etnografia*, no. 2 (1963), p. 67.

for reflecting the extraordinarily broad palette of the spiritual and physical sufferings endured in captivity. Among the principal folkloric sources of songs of captivity, whose main motifs are sorrow, despair, and suffering, are works of traditional folklore: recruit, soldier, and hired laborer songs as well as (more infrequently) wedding ritual songs. In keeping with the traditional body of themes reflected in the "German slavery" variations of the above-mentioned songs (both completely reinterpreted and practically unchanged), the motif of pain and suffering caused by separation from one's home and family, the miseries endured in a foreign land, the uncertainty of one's subsequent fate, and sorrow and homesickness for the native land came to occupy a central place. Anguish that stemmed specifically from separation was ostensibly one of the greatest moral tribulations endured by "captives," for it absorbed not only the pain of forced and unexpected loneliness but also fear of the uncertain fate of family and friends, as well as uncertainty as to whether they would ever be reunited. One of the extremely painful tribulations depicted in the folkloric writings of forced laborers is doubt: Has the captive's family forgotten about him or her; are they waiting for him or her to return? A characteristic feature of captive songs of "traditional" derivation was borrowed images of the "cuckoo mother" (or the motif of a conversation between a mother and a cuckoo), a "black raven" heralding or symbolizing misfortune and separation, a nightingale that brings good news, as well as certain neologisms that were created around the motif of the "guilder rose-raspberry," the most well-known Ukrainian cycle of songs, etc. Songs of farewell, song-letters, and song-conversations—most often between a daughter and her mother, in which the girl who has been driven into captivity often does not even expect to return—were a wildly popular form of those songs:

My fate: to lie in a grave
Overgrown with grass,
Yours to cry until death, mother,
Over my misfortune!⁵⁴

However, these traditional songs by far do not exhaust the entire panoply of the provenance sources of captive songs, to which must be added borrowings from prison folklore and urban "cruel" romances dating to the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries, as well as to songs derived from literature, including popular hits of the Soviet era and well-known songs from the prerevolutionary period. Folklore derived from popular songs were more plot-heavy—one might even say informative—than emotionally saturated, but even so it addressed the suffering of those who had been sent away to carry out forced labor:

Mountains appear in the distance,
Barracks line the ravines,
Sullen, starving workers from the east
Line the barracks

⁵⁴ *Sestra Ukraina: (pesni nevoli i bor'by)*, comp. and trans. GLOBALA, A. (Moscow, 1947), p. 52.

Joyful songs aren't heard there,
 Only the suffering of the people is seen,
 Of those they herded to work
 From their wide beloved plains...⁵⁵

In turn, captive song adaptations of prison folklore and so-called urban "cruel" romances were replete with sorrow, suffering, and bitter loneliness:

I will die beneath German sheets,
 They'll bury me without ado.
 No one will mourn for me,
 No loved ones will come.⁵⁶

3. Conclusions

"I glanced through the newspapers—well, for March, February—and judging from the headlines, the war was practically waged for our sake: 'Let us liberate our sisters and fiancées from fascist captivity'—there was really no other goal!" declares the main heroine of Iurii Slepukin's novel *Chas muzhestva* [Time of Bravery], who was deported to Germany during the war. Indeed, the forced labor subject occupied a central place in the Soviets' propagandistic rhetoric of wartime, and the suffering endured by Soviet civilians who carried out this type of work was its mobilizational heart. It was precisely at this time that the formula of "fascist slavery," which had existed throughout all the postwar years as the main content-rich emphasis in the memory of forced labor during the Great Patriotic War, acquired integrative importance for the constructed discourse of suffering. Within the framework of this formula, two key semantic dominants of the "discourse of suffering" blended physical suffering, ranging from excessively taxing labor, hunger, chaotic living conditions, crippling, beatings, and abuses perpetrated by "slave owners," with moral suffering, which encompassed the above-mentioned abuses and outrages, separation from loved ones and the Motherland, and the captives' uncertainty about their own fate and that of their near and dear ones.

During the Soviet era various other resources were enlisted in the recreation of the experience of the forced laborers' physical and moral sufferings. They ranged from propagandistic-agitational brochures and materials to literary and cinematic works, publications of samples of folkloric writings, letters and memoirs of forced laborers, etc. The logic behind their inclusion coincided with the key tasks of the Soviet memory project on the Second World War in general and forced labor in particular, which were implemented in keeping with the urgent requirements of the concrete period of time and its political demands. Thus, the main feature of the recreation of the suffering endured by forced laborers during the first years of the war was that

⁵⁵ *Skazki, pesni, chastushki, poslovitsy Leningradskoi oblasti: sb[ornik]*, comp. and ed. BAKHTIN, V. S. (Leningrad, 1982), p. 273.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 275.

appropriate topics were being introduced into the public space during an event that was not yet concluded and had not been interpreted and organized; for that reason it was characterized by both semantic ambiguity and semantic extremes. At the same time, it was intended to correspond to the key task of the period: the mobilization of all forces (including informational and propagandistic) to the struggle against the enemy. Most in demand among the resources that were intended to correspond to this situation were those characterized by their imagistic capacity and hortatory expression or visual laconism; in other words, those that combined the two main stimulating aspects of influence—emotional and mobilizational—because the experiences that these resources were meant to elicit not only had to serve as an impetus for people to commiserate with the fate of the subjugated captives, but also to provide a stimulus and emotional foundation for the active struggle for liberation.

After the war ended, the hortatory-liberational intention remained only in reports about former forced laborers—now called Displaced Persons—who were now enduring “new enslavement,” this time at the hands of the Soviets’ former allies and other capitalists states. Until the mid-1950s the image of a captive girl suffering in a foreign land, which had been created and intensively exploited during the war, occupied the central place in the general space of forced labor memory. Then, starting in the late 1950s, the image of the captive girl was supplanted by the image of a male forced laborer, with whose emergence the recreation of the civilian population’s sufferings in “fascist hard labor” acquired an autobiographical and artistic dimension, above all in the works of Vitalii Semin.

Naturally, the examples cited above do not exhaust the entire scope and variety of materials offered to the Soviet reader, which recreated and disseminated the experience of suffering and slave labor in Germany. But they make it possible for scholars to affirm the representative presence of this topic in the general discourse of heroism and suffering throughout the calamitous war years, the need for it, and its instrumentality and variability as determined by the concrete sociopolitical demands during a certain interval of time.

Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta Daria Olynyk